

SUBJECT: All CPF E-Mail - TRICARE Transitional Health Care for Reservists
Sent: Tuesday, 17 Sep 02

The purpose of this E-mail is to provide you with information regarding the TRICARE Transitional Health Care Benefits for Reserve and Guard members returning from active duty and the reinstatement of their Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) enrollment.

Under the new Department of Defense Worldwide TRICARE Transitional Health Care Demonstration Project, employees called to active duty in support of contingency operations for more than 30 days and who return to duty after 1 Jan 02 are eligible to receive transitional health care benefits for up to 60 or 120 days. Following their period of active duty service, employees with fewer than six years of active duty service are eligible for 60 days of transitional health care benefits and those with six years or more are eligible for 120 days of continued health care.

Currently, upon return from military active duty, the FEHB enrollment is reinstated for employees who elected to terminate their coverage upon entry on active military duty, or their coverage terminated at the end of 18 months. Under the Transitional Health Care Benefits program, the employee may not want their FEHB reinstated immediately since they may still be eligible for TRICARE for an additional 60 or 120 days.

We requested Field Advisory Services contact the Office of Personnel Management for guidance on processing requests from employees who do not want their health insurance reinstated immediately upon their return to duty. We have not yet received a response.

Until further guidance is received, follow the current procedures for reinstating the FEHB coverage:

- Staffing reinstates the FEHB enrollment for eligible employees when processing the return to duty action;
- CPF completes the Standard Form (SF) 2810, Notice of Change in Health Benefits Enrollment, and forwards a copy to the carrier and to BEST. The effective date for the SF 2810 and the reinstatement are both the same as the effective date of the return to duty action.

Employees who do not want their FEHB coverage need to contact BEST via the Employee Line within 60 days of return to duty and request their FEHB be cancelled. The cancellation will be effective at the end of the pay period in which the employee contacts BEST. Employees will have premiums deducted from their pay until the effective date of the cancellation. Employees need to review their Leave and Earning Statements that pertain to the date of cancellation. Employees have from 31 days before through 60 days after losing their TRICARE coverage to re-enroll in FEHB and if they fail to do so within the 60 day period, they must wait until the next FEHB open season or a qualifying life event to pick up coverage. In order to avoid a break in coverage, employees may want to time their reenrollment to be effective prior to the termination of TRICARE. A reenrollment is effective on the first day of the pay period that begins after they make their FEHB election via the BEST automated systems.

In addition, we've updated the brochures "Information for Employees Returning from Military Active Duty." The Full and Limited versions, dated 12 Sep 02, are available on the BEST homepage under BEST Pamphlets and Brochures, and through the fax-back module of the BEST automated phone system (Fax Documents 0111 and 0112, respectively). We request you provide each employee returning to duty from active military service with the updated brochure and obtain their signature showing receipt of same.

Should we obtain additional guidance, we will pass this information on to you.

Chief, Special Operations Division
Air Force Personnel Center